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Status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/131, on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, indicates the activities undertaken with the resources of the Fund and shows income and expenditure as well as the pledges and payments made to the Fund. It updates the information contained in the previous biennial report (A/59/257) and reports on the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Board of Trustees, held in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

* The submission of the report was delayed so as to reflect the most up-to-date information and to carry out consultations.

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I. Mandate of the Fund

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 40/131 of 13 December 1985, established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations. The purpose of the Fund is to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in participating in the deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights by providing them with financial assistance, funded by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities.[1]

2. By its resolution 50/156 of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly extended the mandate of the Fund by deciding that the Fund should also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in participating in the deliberations of the open-ended intersessional Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights charged with elaborating a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, established by the Commission by its resolution 1995/32 of 3 March 1995 and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/32 of 25 July 1995.

3. The General Assembly further extended the mandate of the Fund in its resolution 56/140 of 19 December 2001 by deciding that the Fund should be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in attending, as observers, the sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

II. Administration and Board of Trustees

4. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131, the Fund is administered by the Secretary-General, in accordance with the relevant financial rules and regulations of the United Nations on general trust funds for humanitarian assistance and with the advice of a Board of Trustees, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). OHCHR acts as the secretariat of both the Fund and the Board of Trustees.

5. The Board of Trustees is composed of five persons with relevant experience in issues affecting indigenous populations, who serve in their personal capacity as United Nations experts. The Board members are appointed by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Subcommission, for a three-year, renewable term.

6. The five members appointed for the term ending on 31 December 2008 are themselves indigenous representatives: Nadir Bekirov (Chairperson, Ukraine), Jannie Lasimbang (Malaysia), Lars Anders Baer (Sweden), Ahmed Mahiou (Algeria) and Tarcila Rivera Zea (Peru).

[1] Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, entitled "Human Rights Council", all mandates, mechanisms and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights, including the Sub-Commission, were assumed as from 19 June 2006 by the Human Rights Council.

III. Grant cycle

A. Admissibility of new applications and selection process

7. Applications for travel grants to attend the 2007 sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum must be submitted by the established deadline of 1 October 2006 to allow for analysis by the secretariat of the Fund and Board of Trustees. Admissible applications will be examined by the Board at its next session, in 2007. Information on the selection process and admissibility can be found in the previous report submitted to the General Assembly (A/59/257, paras. 9-12).

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the Board of Trustees and secretariat

8. Travel grants are closely monitored before and during the sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum. Beneficiaries are requested to provide a copy of any statement delivered as part of their reporting obligations and to complete two questionnaires on their participation upon return to their home countries.

9. At its annual session, the Board of Trustees reviews the status of all travel grants allocated in previous years, as well as the reports drafted by the secretariat analysing the questionnaires submitted by beneficiaries on their participation and follow-up activities.

10. The Chairman, or another Board member, and a representative of the secretariat attend the sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum in order to meet with all beneficiaries present and to assess the impact of their participation on the deliberations of the sessions.

IV. Eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Board of Trustees

11. The Board of Trustees held its eighteenth session from 28 February to 4 March 2005 (8 meetings) and its nineteenth session from 13 to 17 February 2006 (10 meetings).

12. The Board examined information prepared by its secretariat concerning the financial situation of the Fund, new contributions paid and pledges made by Governments since the seventeenth session, applications for new travel grants to attend the twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the eleventh session of the Working Group charged with elaborating a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples of the Commission on Human Rights and the fifth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Board also met with representatives of donor Governments during its annual meetings with donors.

13. Grant recommendations made by the Board of Trustees at its eighteenth and nineteenth sessions were approved by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on 7 March 2005 and 1 March 2006, respectively.

A. Implementation of recommendations

14. The Board noted with satisfaction that all recommendations adopted at its seventeenth session (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2004/8) and eighteenth session (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2005/5) had been implemented by its secretariat.

B. Financial situation of the Fund

15. The table below indicates the contributions received for the attribution of grants at the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Board of Trustees.

Donor (non-governmental organizations are indicated)	Eighteenth session — Amount (United States dollars)	Nineteenth session — Amount (United States dollars)	Date paid[a]
Algeria	5 000		8 June 2004
	5 000		31 January 2005
Australia		17 698	22 December 2005
Brazil		10 000	12 December 2005
Canada	12 520		3 November 2004
		9 880	22 March 2005
Chile	1 000		6 August 2004
		1 000	15 June 2005
		1 000	13 October 2005
		1 000	10 February 2004
Denmark		53 193	16 March 2005
Estonia	12 715		23 December 2004
		11 297	23 December 2005
Finland	34 939		24 September 2004
		32 317	5 September 2005
France		129 366	29 April 2005
Japan		11 397	6 January 2006
New Zealand	10 000		19 February 2004
		10 000	4 February 2005
Norway	43 617		1 April 2004
	23 924		15 December 2004
		47 330	11 April 2005
Switzerland		115 537	4 January 2006
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	15 000		3 November 2004
Rivera Brooklin	273		23 September 2004
Yoko Shiokawa	313		13 April 2004
	409		7 September 2004
		417	28 April 2005
Total	**164 668**	**451 614**	

[a] According to official receipt vouchers available at OHCHR.

C. Consideration of new applications and recommendations for grants at the eighteenth session

16. The Board considered 193 admissible new applications for grants and recommended 25 travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the twenty-third session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in Geneva from 18 to 22 July 2005, for a total amount of approximately $80,800 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2005/5, annex IV).

17. The Board further considered 15 admissible new applications and recommended nine travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the eleventh session of the Working Group charged with elaborating a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, held in Geneva from 5 to 16 December 2005 and its resumed session, from 30 January to 3 February 2006, for a total amount of approximately $62,400 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2005/5, annex V).

18. In addition, the Board considered 256 admissible new applications and recommended 26 travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the fourth session of the Permanent Forum, held in New York from 16 to 27 May 2005, for a total amount of approximately $136,900 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2005/5, annex III).

	Working Group on Indigenous Populations		Working Group on [illegible]			
Geographical area[1]	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries
Africa	76	8	6	3	86	11
Americas	93	7	4	2	113	9
Asia	67	5	1	1	56	4
Europe	17	5	4	3	1	0
Total	**193**	**25**	**15**	**9**	**256**	**24**

[1] The geographical distribution reflects the applications received and not necessarily geographical classifications as used by the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations legislative bodies.

D. Consideration of new applications and recommendations for grants at the nineteenth session

19. The Board considered 177 new admissible applications and recommended 45 travel grants[2] for indigenous representatives to attend the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in Geneva from 31 July to 4 August 2006, for a total amount of approximately $148,115 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2006/4, annex IV).

[2] The Board of Trustees initially approved 45 grants and placed 5 on a contingency list. The additional 5 beneficiaries were approved upon confirmation of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

20. The Board further considered 15 new admissible applications and recommended 10 travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the twelfth session of the Working Group charged with elaborating a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples,[3] for a total amount of approximately $46,900 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/C.N.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2006/4, annex V).

21. In addition, the Board considered 203 new admissible applications and recommended 46 grants for indigenous representatives to attend the fifth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held in New York from 15 to 26 May 2006, for a total amount of approximately $244,120 (for the list of beneficiaries, see E/C.N.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2006/4, annex III).

Geographical area[a]	Working Group on Indigenous Populations		Working Group on a draft declaration		Permanent Forum	
	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries	Number of applications	Number of beneficiaries
Africa	63	36	3	3	82	17
Americas	41	31	6	5	70	12
Asia and the Pacific	60	18	2	2	43	14
Europe and the Arctic	13	5	2	2	8	3
Total	**177**	**45**	**15**	**10**	**203**	**46**

[a] The geographical distribution reflects the applications received and not necessarily geographical distribution as used by the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations legislative bodies.

22. The selection of beneficiaries reflects the admissible applications received, which might not be geographically balanced, as some countries submitted many applications and others submitted only a few, or none at all.

E. Other recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees

1. Trust Fund database

23. The Board of Trustees recommended that the secretariat explore the possibility of developing a database containing relevant information on grants and beneficiaries, including information on their indigenous communities, the beneficiaries themselves and their respective organizations.

2. Dissemination of information on the Fund

24. The Board recommended that the secretariat of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, at its annual session in 2006, continue to invite the Chairperson, or any other member of the Board, or of the secretariat of the Board and Fund, to deliver a statement introducing the report on the Fund.

[3] On 29 June 2006, the Human Rights Council adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by its resolution 2006/2 and recommended its adoption by the General Assembly. Therefore, no further session of the open-ended intersessional Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights in charge of elaborating a draft declaration will be held.

25. During the sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum, the secretariat should continue to organize information meetings on the Fund for indigenous representatives.

26. The Board members emphasized the need to actively distribute the Fund's application forms as widely as possible, in particular in regions and countries that in the past have been underrepresented at sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum.

27. With a view to reaching a wider range of indigenous organizations, the Board recommended that the Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Unit of OHCHR explore various communication channels and develop a directory of indigenous organizations.

28. The Board recommended producing a publication on the Fund, based on the model of the Decade Fund, which would include general information on the history and work of the Fund. The publication should be produced in English, French, Spanish and Russian.

3. Future direction of the Fund

29. The members highlighted the fundamental importance of the Fund and the Board as an independent United Nations body that provides direct assistance to indigenous peoples and allows them to participate in United Nations meetings of vital importance for them. They underlined the fact that at present all the Board members were indigenous representatives themselves.

30. In the light of the importance of providing direct assistance to human rights projects for indigenous peoples, the Board recommended expanding the mandate of the Fund to include financial support for human rights projects, in addition to the provision of travel grants. The Board underlined the need to avoid duplication with other funds providing direct assistance to indigenous projects.

31. The Board recommended exploring the possibility of extending the mandate of the Fund to allow for grants to support indigenous peoples' participation in meetings of United Nations bodies other than the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum, in particular meetings of human rights treaty bodies.

4. Cost plan for 2007

32. The Board revised and approved the cost plan of the Fund for 2007, with envisaged expenditure amounting to $733,600.

F. Fund-raising

33. The Board held its meeting with donors during its nineteenth session. Representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, the Holy See, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the European Commission attended. The Board expressed its appreciation for the donors' contributions to the Fund and their pledges.

32. Board members recommended sending a letter to donors in September 2006 appealing for additional contributions to be paid before its next session in order to allow it to increase further the number of grants and the representation of indigenous communities and organizations in 2007.

V. Implementation of decisions concerning travel grants

33. The secretariat of the Fund reports to the Board of Trustees at each annual session on the implementation of decisions made at its previous session and approved by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Board reviews the implementation of those decisions, and the secretariat reports annually on their implementation to the Commission on Human Rights and to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and biennially to the General Assembly.

VI. Trends over the period 2005-2006

A. Number of applications received to attend the sessions of the Working Groups and the Permanent Forum

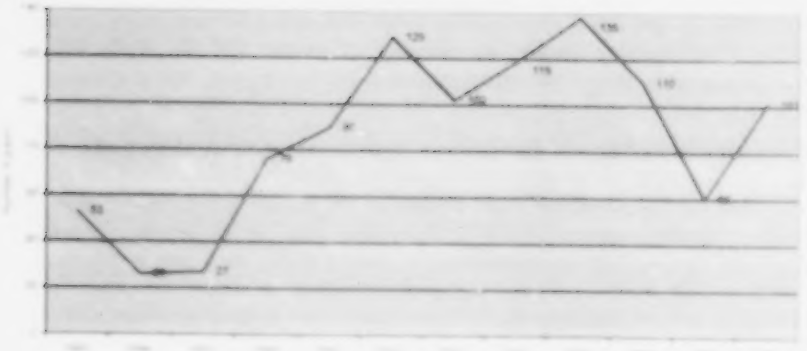
34. The table below shows a substantial increase in the number of admissible applications from 1997 (52) to 2006 (395). However, the period 2005-2006 has been marked by a slight decrease in the number of applications received.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Working Group on Indigenous Populations	47	72	220	119	225	182	231	296	193	177
Working Group charged with elaborating a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples	5	3	20	36	32	27	73	33	18	18
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues					–	373	208	246	256	200
Total	52	75	240	155	257	582	462	547	464	395

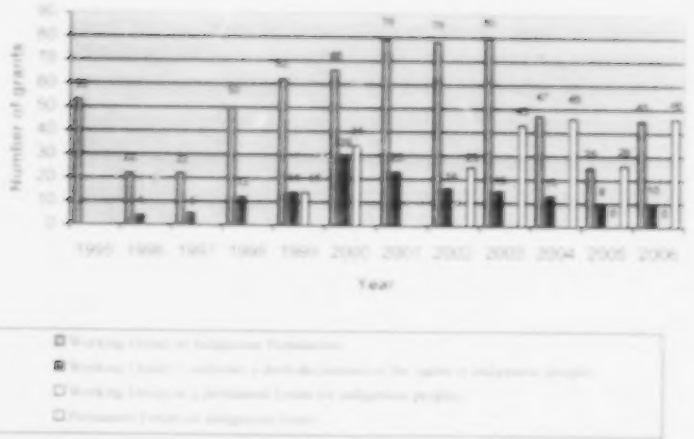
37. Every year, in addition to the admissible applications to attend the sessions of the two Working Groups and the Permanent Forum, the secretariat receives more than 150 applications that are not admissible, as they are not complete, do not fall within the mandate of the Fund or are received after the established deadline.

B. Annual allocation of travel grants

38. In 2006 the secretariat received a total of 395 admissible applications to attend the sessions of the two Working Groups and the Permanent Forum. With the resources available, it was able to allocate only 110 travel grants. Between 1995 and 2006 the Fund allocated grants as illustrated in the figure below:



39. The distribution of grants between 1995 and 2006, by session, is represented as follows:



C. Contributions received by the Fund

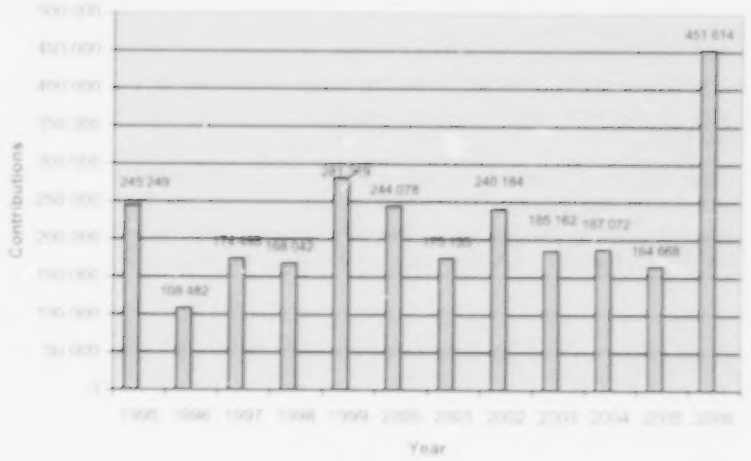
40. The Board can allocate travel grants on the basis of the contributions paid and duly registered by the United Nations Treasurer, as well as any balance remaining from previous years, as established by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

41. Since the creation of the Fund in 1985, its mandate has been expanded three times in response to developments and the changing realities of the United Nations system and indigenous peoples. The Board and the secretariat have reacted immediately to those new challenges so as to enable indigenous people to benefit from each new mandate, with the support of donors. Over the years, the General

Assembly and the regular donors to the Fund have viewed the Fund as an important tool in providing assistance to indigenous people and have recognized the accomplishments of its Board of Trustees in carrying out this task.

42. When the mandate of the Fund is extended, applications received from indigenous organizations and communities increase, and therefore the amount of contributions to meet the demand should also increase. The Fund and the Board can function effectively only if Governments that have not previously contributed to the Fund offer their support and regular donors increase their contributions, as the General Assembly has repeatedly requested.

43. The following figure shows the trend in contributions from 1995 to 2006, in United States dollars.



44. In 2006 there was a significant increase in the amount of contributions received.

D. Annual expenditure

45. In accordance with its mandate, the only expenditures encumbered annually under the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations are travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the sessions of the two Working Groups and the Permanent Forum. About $30,000 is allocated every year for the organization of the session of the Board of Trustees in Geneva.

46. Additionally, in accordance with the United Nations financial rules and regulations governing the general trust funds for humanitarian assistance, 13 per cent of the envisaged expenditure is set aside to cover programme support costs and 15 per cent for the operating cash reserve.

VII. How to contribute to the Fund

47. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. Information on how to contribute can be obtained from the secretariat at: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Telephone: + (41) (22) 917 97 37; + (41) (22) 917 91 64; Facsimile: + (41) (22) 917 90 66; e-mail: IndigenousFunds@ohchr.org.

VIII. Recommendations

48. **The Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations foresees the need to receive an additional $733,600 prior to the start of the twentieth session of the Board, scheduled to be held from 26 February to 2 March 2007, in order to be able to satisfy a sufficient number of the new applicants envisaged for 2007 and to fulfil its mandate satisfactorily.**

49. **The Board of Trustees strongly encourages Governments that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so, and encourages donors to contribute to the Fund by the end of 2006 in order that the contributions may be duly recorded by the United Nations Treasurer in advance of the annual session of the Board.**